THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

BENGALURU • FRIDAY • APRIL 30, 2021 • ₹7.00 • PAGES 34 • LATE CITY EDITION

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GOVT ALLOWS STEROID USE FOR PATIENTS IN HOME ISOLATION

The latest guidelines state that if Covid symptoms persist beyond seven days, doctor should be consulted for treatment with low-dose oral steroids

WHAT MEDICINES ONE SHOULD TAKE AT HOME

If fever is not controlled with a maximum dose of Paracetamol 650 mg four times a day, consult the doctor, who may consider advising non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug like Naproxen 250 mg twice a day, the Union Health Ministry said. "Tab. Ivermectin (200 mcg/kg once a day, to be taken on empty stomach) for 3 to 5 days should be considered," the guidelines stated

REMDESIVIR INJECTION ONLY IN HOSPITALS

- Inhalational Budesonide (given via inhalers with spacer at a dose of 800 mcg twice daily for five to seven days) to be given if fever or cough persist beyond five days, they added
- Remdesivir or any other investigational therapy must be administered only in a hospital setting, the health ministry said

10 days

DURATION OF HOME ISOLATION FOR PATIENTS AFTER ONSET OF SYMPTOMS

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • WARANGAL • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

EXIT POLL

Poll of polls gives 137 to Trinamool, 142 to BJP; DMK sweep seen in TN; Pinarayi projected to retain power

BENGAL TOO CLOSE TO CALL

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ New Delhi

Chances of Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress retaining power in West Bengal appeared too close to call, while Assam is likely to give the BJP another shot at power, if exit poll projections on Thursday are anything to go by. In Tamil Nadu, exit polls predicted a crushing victory for the M K Stalin-led DMK, while the Pinarayi Vijayan-led LDF appeared comfortably ahead in the race to retain power in Kerala. As for Puducherry, exit polls put it in the BJP's pocket.

ABP News CVoter predicted the Trinamool getting between 152-164 seats, while BJP could get between 109-121 in West Bengal. The Left alliance, including the Congress, is expected to get between 14-25.

On the contrary, the Republic-CNX polls gave the BJP a slight edge by projecting 138-148 seats for the party in the 294-seat Assembly and 128-138 to the Trinamool. The eight-phase polls in West Bengal ended on Thursday evening.

As for Assam, the BJP-led NDA is likely to beat anti-incumbency to retain power. The India Today-Axis My India exit poll gave 75-85 of Assam's 126 seats to the NDA. The Congress's grand alliance is likely to win 40-50 seats, it predicted.

In Tamil Nadu, the exit polls predict a landslide for the Opposition DMK alliance, giving it a staggering 165 of the 234 seats that went to polls. The AIADMK, which had the BJP as its ally, could end up end up with 66 seats.

As for Kerala, the LDF is all set to retain power with the poll of polls predicting 84 to LDF, 54 to UDF and 2 to the BJP. If the India Today-Axis exit poll is to be believed, the LDF is expected to win around 104-120 seats, UDF 20-36, BJP 0-2 and others 0-2.

WEST BENGAL (TOTAL SEATS 294)

Survey	TMC+	BJP+	Left+
Republic CNX	133	143	16
ABP CVoter	158	115	19
Jan Ki Baat	173	113	6
ETG Research	169	110	12
P-MARQ	158	120	14
Peoples Pulse-INDIA TV	88	192	12
Poll of polls	137	142	13

CURRENT SEAT TALLY OF PARTIES

201 TMC+ 23 INC 19 CPI(M) 34 BJP 6 Others 11 Vacant

TAMIL NADU (TOTAL SEATS 234)

Survey	DMK+	ADMK+	AMMK+	Oth
Republic CNX	165	63	-	6
P-MARQ	177	52	5	-
Today's Chanakya	174	57	-	3
Axis-My India	185	46	2	1
CVoter	166	64	1	3
Poll of polls	173	56	2	3

CURRENT SEAT TALLY OF PARTIES

124 ADMK 104 DMK 1 AMMK 5 Vacant

KERALA (TOTAL SEATS 140)

Survey	LDF	UDF	NDA
Poll Diary	77-87	51-61	2-3
Times Now CVoter	74	65	1
Today's Chanakya	93-111	36-44	0-6
India Today-Axis	104-120	20-36	0-2
Republic TV-CNX	72-80	58-64	1-5
P-MARQ	72-80	58-64	1-5
ABP CVoter	71-77	62-68	0-2
Jan Ki Baat	68-78	48-58	0
Poll of polls	84	54	2

CURRENT SEAT TALLY OF PARTIES

91 LDF 41 UDF 1 BJP 7 Vacant

ASSAM (TOTAL SEATS 126)

Survey	BJP+	INC+	Oth
Aaj Tak-Axis	75-85	40-50	1-2
Today's Chanakya	61-79	47-65	0-3
ABP CVoter	58-71	53-66	0-3
Peoples Pulse	63-68	61-66	0-6
Poll of polls	69	56	1

CURRENT SEAT TALLY OF PARTIES

71 BJP 19 INC 13 AIUDF 11 BPF 12 Vacant

PUDUCHERRY (TOTAL SEATS 30)

Survey	BJP+	INC+	Oth
Republic CNX	16-20	11-13	-
ABP CVoter	19-23	6-10	1-2
Poll of polls	20	9	1

Vax by mid-May for 18+ in K'taka

Chief Minister says drive in state will be taken up in phases, depending on availability of vaccine stocks

ANUSHA RAVI @ Bengaluru

WITH Prime Minister Narendra Modi announcing the opening up of Covid-19 vaccination for citizens between the ages 18 and 44 starting May 1, lakhs of people in that age group have been registering on the CoWIN app since Wednesday. However, Karnataka may start vaccinating citizens in that age group only towards the later part of May second week or early part of May third week.

With a severe backlog of orders and demands from multiple states other than their prior commitment to the Union Government, vaccine manufacturers may be able to deliver the first batch of vaccines, independently being procured by Karnataka, only by mid-May.

Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa, in a statement on Thursday, said the fourth phase of the vaccination drive will be taken up "in stages". With crores of citizens who have registered for the vaccination raising complaints about not finding slots or centres to schedule their jabs, the CM said the drive will begin as and when vaccine stocks are made available.

"The State Government is procuring one crore doses of vaccine. Work order has been placed to procure an additional one crore doses of vaccine. The fourth phase of the vaccination drive will be taken up in stages. Pharmaceutical companies are enhancing their production capacity to meet the increased demand. A third vaccine option is also being introduced. Under these circumstances, the vaccination drive will continue based on the availability of vaccines. The drive will be planned to ensure systematic, disciplined and smooth implementation," Yediyurappa said in the statement. The CM, however, refused to set a timeline on deliveries of the vaccines that have already been ordered as well as the date on which the government will roll out the fourth phase.

Meanwhile, sources in the government suggest that Karnataka may receive its first batch of the one crores doses of Covishield vaccines from Serum Institute in Pune only in the second week of May. P5

A long queue of ambulances carrying bodies of Covid victims waiting at the Peenya crematorium in Bengaluru | VINOD KUMAR T

May 1 rollout just not doable

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

THE proposed May 1 launch of the mass vaccination programme for all Indian adults looks doubtful with states not having enough vaccines and a Chief Minister moving the calendar as far ahead as September.

Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Kerala, Assam, West Bengal, Punjab, Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh have said the inoculation drive may get delayed by weeks or even months. Madhya Pradesh and Tamil Nadu are trying hard to meet the launch target, but there is confusion on availability of the jabs.

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy on Thursday said doses for the 18-45 years age group will be available only after the current inoculation drive for those above 45 years is completed. And, that will be in September. According to Jagan, it will take four months to complete vaccinating the youth population, which means they will be fully vaccinated only by the end of January next.

The situation is no different in other states though most prefer not to give a timeline as to when vaccination for 18- to 44-year-olds can start. For example, Kerala, which got 3.5 lakh doses this week and expects another 1 lakh soon, is focusing on inoculating those above 45 years.

Telangana is also not sure if it can start the programme on Saturday.

BJP-ruled Karnataka has not officially postponed the May 1 rollout date but the state may be able to start only in May second or third week.

CONTINUED ON: P9

FB blocks, restores #ResignModi hashtag

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ New Delhi

SOCIAL media giant Facebook on Wednesday blocked posts tagged #ResignModi in the wake of the Covid tsunami, but restored them a few hours later claiming it had done so on its own by mistake.

A Facebook spokesperson said, "We temporarily blocked this hashtag by mistake, not because the Indian government asked us to, and have since restored it."

For its part, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology said the government had not issued any direction to remove the hashtag.

OVERSIGHT BOARD RAP

Oversight Board of FB overturned a decision to remove a user's post under the 'Dangerous Individuals and Organisations' category and urged it to avoid mistakes that silence voices of religious minorities

In the few hours when the suspension was on, Facebook's notification showed, "Posts with #ResignModi are temporarily hidden here. Some content in those posts goes against our Community Standards."

Posts with the #ResignModi hashtag criticised the lack of Covid beds, the continuing shortage of oxygen support, the massive political rallies in poll-bound states, the acute shortage of vaccines, and the huge rush of bodies at crematoriums and graveyards.

A few days ago, Twitter had taken down a bunch of tweets critical of how the Centre had handled the pandemic.

Pvt, govt health facilities running low on vaccines

BOSKY KHANNA & IFFATH FATHIMA @Bengaluru

DESPITE attempts by the government to allay any fears, there seems to be an obvious shortage of vaccines at vaccination centres, mainly private, causing confusion among beneficiaries. Those awaiting their second dose of the vaccine, in particular, are a worried lot as they fear that not getting it in time may compromise its effects in protecting them against the Novel Coronavirus.

STATEWIDE	APRIL 28	APRIL 29
Fresh cases	39,047	35,024
Recoveries	11,833	14,142
Deaths	229	270

Many beneficiaries who were scheduled to get their second dose on April 28 and 29 were turned away at private vaccination centres, while those who had their appointments confirmed for April 30 are receiving messages from the CoWIN portal about cancellation of the scheduled vaccination and requesting them to reschedule it. However, no reasons are being offered.

Several doctors and staff at private vaccination centres informed *TNIE* that they are not getting the vaccine supplies. P5

B'luru police chief promoted to DGP rank

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

WITH Director General of Police-Training Padam Kumar Garg retiring on Friday, the State Government has issued orders elevating Bengaluru City Police Commissioner and Additional Director General of Police (ADGP) Kamal Pant to the rank of DGP on Thursday.

While promoting Pant, the government has also upgraded the post of Commissioner of Police, Bengaluru City, from the rank of ADGP to DGP. *The New Indian Express* had first reported in its April 3 edition that the government is likely to retain Pant as City Police Commissioner though he was due for promotion as DGP.

This is not the first time the City Police Commissioner's post is being upgraded.

CONTINUED ON: P5

OUR IPL SPACE

Football star Sunil Chhetri is giving access to his Twitter account to 'real-life captains', who are doing amazing work, helping in transmission of info

How an NGO in Tenkasi (TN) led by Mohammed Ali Jinna is helping people in the region give Covid victims a decent burial | P17

NATIONWIDE	APRIL 28	APRIL 29
Fresh cases	3,60,960	3,79,257
Recoveries	2,61,162	2,69,507
Deaths	3,293	3,645

JAB-O-METER

TAKE YOUR SHOT

April 28: 20,49,754 doses

April 29: 20,84,931 doses

TOTAL DOSES: 15,21,05,563

DELHI HOSPITALS CONTINUE STRUGGLE FOR OXYGEN

Delhi's VIMHANS Hospital and Rosewood Hospital, both treating Covid patients, sent SOS for oxygen, saying their supplies would last a few hours alone. VIMHANS' current supply will last for two hours, it medical director Dr Ubaid Hamid said

Tougher curbs coming in Kerala

The Kerala government on Thursday decided to impose more stringent curbs from May 4-9 as the state's daily case surge crossed 38,000. For a week from May 4, stringent restrictions will be put in place. People should follow 'self lockdown', Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said

Bharat Biotech's turn to cut cost

A day after SII lowered Covishield price by ₹100 to states, Bharat Biotech reduced its Covaxin's cost from ₹600 to ₹400 per dose. Sources said the reduction came after a nudge by the Centre

UP weekend lockdown extended

The state decided to raise the duration of weekend lockdown by 24 hrs. It will cover Mondays too. "Weekend closure will be applicable from Friday 8 pm till Tue 7 am," Addl Chief Secretary (Home) Navneet Sehgal said

ALL FOR EASY MONEY

Cheat targets Covid patients' families desperate for ICU beds

MANJU SHETTAR @ Bengaluru

IN a cruel case that should stand out as a reminder not to fall for unverified posts on social media, offering help in hospital admission, several families of Covid-19 patients have been allegedly cheated by a 31-year-old housing contractor who promised ICU beds against payments. He vanished after receiving the payments, leaving the families worse off. In at least one case, a victim lost both parents due to lack of ICU beds that the accused had promised.

Manish Sarkar, hailing from West Bengal and residing in Malleswaram, is alleged to have cheated at least 17 families who were desperately seeking ICU beds. Sarkar's modus operandi was to circulate his contact number on social media groups, promising ICU beds in quick time for Covid-19 patients. With his post being forwarded several times, may have fallen for his promises in a desperate bid to save their loved ones. He demanded Rs 27,000 as commission for each bed. After he was approached by Jayanagar resident Stephan Raj who was looking for an ICU bed for his Covid-19 positive and symptomatic parents, Sarkar allegedly forced him to pay up Rs 20,000 on April 23. On not getting an ICU bed, Raj's mother and father died over the following two days.

After performing the late rites of his parents, an angry and frustrated Raj approached the police on Wednesday, seeking action against Sarkar. Based on the complaint, the Jayanagar police tracked down Sarkar to his rented house in Malleswaram and arrested him.

Sarkar is reported to have confessed during interrogation that he wanted to make easy money and hence cheated the 17 families. He also admitted he had absolutely no contacts with any hospital. P5

EXPRESS READ

US to maintain military presence in Indo-Pacific

Washington: Declaring that "America is rising anew" under his leadership, President Joe Biden has told China that the US will maintain a "strong" military presence in the Indo-Pacific "not to start conflict, but to prevent one" as Beijing became more assertive in the strategically vital region.

Karnataka High Court penalises Devas entity

Bengaluru: The Karnataka High Court on Thursday imposed a cost of Rs 5 lakh on Devas Employees Mauritius Pvt Ltd for abusing the process of law by filing a petition as a proxy on behalf of Devas Multimedia Pvt Ltd. The case relates to an agreement for lease of space segment capacity on ISRO/Antrix S-Band satellite. P5

WITH THIS ISSUE

CITY'S BEST WEEKEND GUIDE

INDULGE

34 PAGES, INCLUDING 16 OF INDULGE (TABLOID)